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ABSTRACT

In public-speaking courses, the use of games--a specific type of simulation--can help to overcome three of the most basic problems faced by the teacher: the gap between the study of theory and the application of that theory, the limited experience gained by students confined to speaking situations within classroom walls, and student stage fright. In order to maximize the effectiveness of gaming, the public-speaking instructor should plan carefully in terms of both the overall course framework and the individual games, temper the planning with flexibility and creativity, and utilize the Socratic method in the evaluation sessions. (JM)

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Teaching Public Speaking With Simulations

Carl L. Kell and Larry James Winn

One of the most recent surveys of the first course in speech at U. S. colleges and universities indicates the continued vitality of the public speaking activities so traditionally a part of American speech communication instruction.[1] Few of us would claim, however, that we have discovered the precise combination of means that will enable us to reach all our objectives in the "fundamentals" course. Notwithstanding our rich classical heritage in communication education and the hundreds of studies conducted by modern experimentalists, speech teachers continue to grapple with problems such as speech apprehension and lack of student application of principles on which textbooks expound and teachers pontificate. Since our classroom research and armchair philosophy of the past two years have convinced us of the potential value of games and simulations, we raise two related questions in this paper: (1) What contribution can gaming make to the course in public speaking? and (2) How can we maximize the effectiveness of gaming in the public speaking course?

Prior to presenting our answers to these questions we will define our terms. For the sake of convenience we here use "gaming" loosely to refer to the use of "structured activities designed to illustrate" and perhaps also give students practice in applying "a specific point."[2] Basically, we adopt Twelker and Layden's definitions. "Simulations" are attempts "to replicate essential aspects of [some] reality so that reality may be better understood and/or controlled." A "game" is a specific type of simulation, involving "competition among participants to achieve pre-specified goals."[3]

More specifically, we use tripartite division of gaming. "Non-simulation

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games are competitive learning contexts in which participant success is determined by the degree of subject-matter comprehension." "Planning exercises are non-simulation games which focus on process rather than content by engaging the participant in the examination of" communication "problems requiring solution." And "interpersonal simulation games are learning contexts in which the participant responds within the simulation game as if he were in the actual system of interaction being simulated."[4]

The Value of Gaming in the Public Speaking Course

Previous discussions of gaming by communication scholars have largely related to its value in teaching principles of interpersonal communication. Similarly, books of games in our field cater mainly to the teacher of dyadic and small group communication. Since interpersonal communication attitudes and skills help lay a foundation for public speaking attitudes and skills, our discussion overlaps with earlier ones, and some of the games included in our guidebook on public speaking would be equally appropriate for textbooks on dyadic and small group communication. Nevertheless, the teacher of public speaking faces unique problems, and the public speaker needs many skills and attitudes not developed by the interpersonal games now on the market.

Specifically, we contend that gaming can help us overcome three of the most basic problems faced by the teacher of public speaking. First, it can help us bridge the proverbial gap between the study of theory and the application of theory. Generally speaking, courses at both the secondary and college level "program" students to read textbooks and listen to lectures with a view toward regurgitating the necessary information at test time. This attitude carries over to speech courses causing students to compartmentalize their thinking, separating the course into two seemingly unrelated parts: the lectures-readings-texts part and the oral assignments part. How many

of us have delivered lectures on the importance and the methods of audience adaptation only then to listen to a round of speeches equally relevant to the classroom audience, a group of little old ladies in Albuquerque and a bunch of dirty old men in Philadelphia?

How can gaming help one overcome this type problem? Where lectures may inculcate concepts which seem divorced from any concrete reality, gaming can lead students to discover principles in reference to their own realm of experience and apply these principles to a specific, albeit hypothetical situation. For example, one simulation in which students assume the role of "strategy planning committees" generally leads them to discover and apply the principle of derived ethos, as this typical comment illustrates: "Man, getting the principal to introduce a speaker in our school was like the kiss of death. Better get a student the other students respect to introduce the speaker."

Gaming can also help us overcome a second problem that afflicts many public speaking courses. It provides a way for us to break the chains with which we have needlessly bound ourselves in a course which often leaves students with a narrow range of skills and myopic view of the public speaking process. Despite the invaluable practice provided by the usual oral assignments, we must recognize that students' potential speaking careers may not be limited to five and ten minute informative and persuasive speeches given to captive classroom audiences. Gaming can extend the student's imagination beyond the classroom walls to other types of speaking situations and beyond the mode of thinking of his peers to that of other types of audiences. The game comprising Appendix 1 illustrates this point.

Finally, gaming may indirectly help us alleviate the perennial problem of student stage fright. We posit this not as a foregone conclusion, but as a

hypothesis worthy of the experimentalist's attention. Weaver reminds us in his informative article on gaming that exercises and games offer students the opportunity "to experience emotion, reduce inhibitions, decrease resistance, permeate defenses, and make for student enjoyment: change of pace, novelty, and tension relief."[5] In these ways gaming can break down formality and create a positive attitude toward the speech class. It requires little inductive leap to conclude that the resulting classroom atmosphere may reduce speech apprehension.

What contributions can gaming make to the public speaking classroom? To summarize: In addition to reducing inhibitions, gaming can lead students to discover for themselves principles of effective speaking and develop in students the ability and proclivity to apply these principles in public speaking situations.

Maximizing the Effectiveness of Gaming

Despite its values, gaming is only one of several tools which when artfully combined can help us reach our objectives. Following our list of suggestions, some original and some borrowed, should help an instructor effectively utilize this unique tool in the public speaking classroom.

I. <u>Plan carefully in terms of overall course framework</u>.

A. Determine the course objectives, particularly the major principles to be communicated.

B. Thoroughly acquaint yourself with games now available which might apply to the public speaking course.

C. Select those objectives which gaming might help you more easily reach.

D. Disperse the games throughout the course in a manner consistent with achieving classroom variety and maximizing their impact.[6] For example, the practice of using a game shortly before a round of speeches leads students to apply principles which are fresh on their minds.

II. Plan carefully in terms of individual games.

A. Carefully match the games with the objectives. The chart labeled Appendix 2, adopted from a similar chart by Twelker and Layden[7] but applied here specifically to the needs of the public speaking instructor, should prove helpful in utilizing this suggestion.

B. Measure the game against a reliable set of criteria. Appendix 3 presents a set of criteria that we have largely extracted from other sources.

C. Determine the appropriate format in light of the time available, the nature of your students, and your objectives. Three obvious formats are lecturette-game-evaluation, assigned reading-game-evaluation, and game-evaluation-specialized readings. Some formats defy such easy categorization as one may weave a game, an oral assignment, and an evaluation into a single fabric.

III. Temper planning with flexibility and creativity.

A. "Have a number of exercises . . . held in abeyance and ready for immediate implementation" to fill unexpected vacancies.[8]

B. Stand ready to change or even drop a game that is not succeeding.

C. Keep games open-ended so that each student can identify with the hypothetical situation.

D. Produce several variations of games so that each class population has as many avenues of identification as possible.

E. Refine old games and invent new ones to fit your particular objectives.

IV. Utilize the Socratic Method in the Evaluation Sessions. This suggestion deserves elaboration since we are the first -- to our knowledge -- to systematically apply this ancient method to gaming technique.

Effective use of the Socratic Method can greatly increase the value of evaluation sessions, during which students figure out precisely what they have learned. In fact, Socrates' technique is the ultimate extension, of the philosophy which constitutes the raison d'être of gaming: Leading a student to discover an idea for himself makes a deeper and more lasting impression than simply presenting an idea to him.

This philosophy has led the authors of this paper to accompany our book of games with a teacher's manual which contains sections corresponding with each of the games. Each section contains a set of objectives and carefully designed sets of questions, potential student answers, and follow up questions to each of these answers. (See Appendix 4)

We realize, of course, that speech classes are less predictable than Plato's scripts; unlike Polus and Callicles, our students will not automatically mouth the "correct" responses until they are led inexorably to the eternal truth on the "last page." Nevertheless, we have found our questions generally reliable in leading students toward discovering principles of effective speaking. Consequently, while our teacher's manual can substitute for neither the art of questioning nor for the common sense of the instructor, it serves as a valuable complement to both.

Summary

The discussion of the Socratic Method, with its emphasis on teacher-student interaction and self-discovery, leads naturally to our summary. "No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge,"[9] writes Kahlil Gibran, exaggerating only a little. When combined with planning, flexibility, and art, gaming can awaken dormant ideas, thus leading students to discover and utilize principles of effective public speaking.

Footnotes

[1]James W. Gibson, John A. Kline, and Charles R. Gruner, "A Re-examination of the First Course in Speech at U. S. Colleges and Universities," The Speech Teacher, 23 (Sept., 1974), 206-214. This survey does point up the increased stress on "multiple" orientation and a decrease in the stress on public speaking. However, public speaking still receives considerable emphasis.

[2]Richard L. Weaver, II, "The Use of Exercises and Games," The Speech Teacher, 23 (Nov., 1974), p. 303. Our definition extends that of Weaver.

[3]Paul A. Twelker and Kent Layden, as found in Ron Stadsklev, Handbook of Gaming in Social Education (Part 1: Textbook), Institute of Higher Education Research and Services, The University of Alabama, Sept. 74. p. 445.

[4]Twelker and Layden, p. 446.

[5]Weaver, p. 302.

[6]Weaver, p. 307.

[7]Twelker and Layden, pp. 448-449.

[8]Weaver, p. 306.

[9]Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), p. 56.

[10]Materials and S/G for this paper have been extracted from our forthcoming supplemental text Guidebook in Public Communication, Kendall-Hunt, 1978.

Appendix 1

Words Don't Mean, People Mean I

Objectives (These objectives are listed in the teacher's manual, not in the student guidebook.)

1. To lead the students to discover that words which have a clear referent for one person may have no referents for other people.

2. To develop within students the tendency to use audience-centered language when communicating orally.

3. To give students practice in explaining noncontroversial subjects to an audience.

Procedure

1. Prepare two three-minute speeches, each on topics within a subject area in which you have particular knowledge or interest. In the first speech assume that you are addressing an audience almost completely ignorant on the subject; prior to preparing this speech, describe your hypothetical audience and gear your speech purpose accordingly. Adapt your second speech to the classroom audience, and gear your purpose statement accordingly.

   Below are some sample assignments from which you can choose if you decide not to make up your own situation:

   A
   - Explain what baseball is to Hungarians visiting this country for the first time. They have heard the term "baseball," but have never seen it played or heard it described.
   - Explain and compare the suicide squeeze and the safety squeeze plays to the classroom audience.

   B
   - Explain what a calorie is to a group of ten year olds.
   - Describe and explain the concept of Recommended Daily Allowance to the classroom audience.

   C
   - To a group of eskimos, unschooled and previously isolated from other civilizations, explain what a combine is.
   - To the classroom audience, explain the basic principles of how a combine works.

2. During the first speech by a speaker the audience members assume the role of the audience that is ignorant on the subject. As an audience member record all the terms used by the speaker, with which you (as a Hungarian visitor, ten-year old, etc.) would be unfamiliar. During the second speech during which you "play" yourself, record the terms with which you <u>are</u> unfamiliar.

Appendix 2

A Comparison of Simulation/Gaming Applications

Characteristic	Non-Simulation Game	Planning Exercise	Interpersonal Simulation Game
1. Ease of adaption	5	4	3
2. Peer Interaction	4	4	5
3. Focus on Interpersonal/ public communication processes	2	2	5
4. Peer feedback/ evaluation	5	4	4
5. Ease of accommodation of various size groups	4	5	3
6. Cognitive learning outcomes			
A. (Communication) concepts	5	4	3
B. Generalizations	5	4	3
C. Principles	5	3	3
D. Identifying communication strategies	1	3-4	4
7. Affective learning outcomes			
A. Perceptions of audience analysis	2	3	5
B. Perception of self as public communicator	3	3	5
C. Sense of control as a public communicator	3	3	5
D. Motivation to participate in the classroom experience	5	4	5
E. Level of interactions among class members	5	5	5

Appendix 3

Criteria

1. Has interest value: Easily learned, plays fast. Requires mental and perhaps also physical activity.

2. Players make decisions and there is an objective standard for judging the quality of their decisions.

3. Most of the players spend most of their time doing something.

5. Very clear explanations of rules and rules fairly simple.

6. Illustrates specific principles and/or gives student practice in applying specific principles.

7. Has been tested and "bugs", if any, removed.

8. Evaluation stage consists of a carefully developed utilization of the Socratic method.

Appendix 4

Life or Death

Problem

A physician has just informed you that you have a disease called Brondotitus. Since you are unfamiliar with the disease he relays to you these facts: For some unexplained reason the incidence of Brondotitus in this country is increasing. Three years ago 500 people contracted the disease; two years ago 2000 contracted it; and during the previous year 5000 contracted it. Currently, little research is being done on the disease, and there is no indication that the amount of research on Brondotitus will be increased in the near future. The public is largely ignorant of the disease's existence. Unless a cure is found you will die in five to seven years.

Procedure

1. Write down as many adjectives as you can think of to describe how you would feel in this situation.

2. Write what, if anything, you would do about this problem.

3. Divide into small groups, with each group deciding what if anything to do about the problem. Write down the group's final decisions.

Objectives

Student discovery of and realization of the importance of these principles:

1. Communication provides an important social function. (See discussions 2 & 3)

2. Communication serves a practical function. (See discussions 1, 4 & 5)

3. Communication provides a method for the discovery and testing of ideas. (See discussion 5)

4. Communication serves as a vital link in the chain of causes bridging the gap between the "is" and the "ought." (See discussion 4)

1

Discussion

T1 How was the doctor able to diagnose your problem?
S1 Through information gained in medical school.
S1 Through reading medical journals.
S1 Through learning from those who've done research on the disease.
T11 So this information was shared with your doctor. Through what means was it shared?
S11 Communication.

S1 Through having researched the disease himself.
T11 Would he be likely to share the results of research with other doctors?
S11 Yes
T111 How?
S111 Through communication.

(The discussion should naturally lead to the conclusion that medical researchers have differing areas of expertise [i.e., different realms of experience] and thus must share their information through the use of communication. This conclusion can be broadened to embrace most areas of life. The result, hopefully, will be to demonstrate the importance of communication and instill in the students a greater desire to teach and learn through communication.)

2

T2 How would you feel if confronted with the problem?
S2 Sad, frustrated, helpless, etc.
T22 How would you seek to alleviate your frustration and sadness?
S22 (At least a few of the students should respond that they would try to "unload" their burden through telling a relative or close friend about their problem.)

3

T3 Suppose that after a year of worrying, the doctor informs you that researchers have just discovered a cure for Brondotitus. What would you do?
S3 (More than a few students will probably say that among other things they would share their happiness with others.)

4

T4 What would you do if confronted with this problem?
S4 Nothing drastic. Simply hope and pray that the researchers will find a cure.
T44 Why not speed up the efforts of the researchers?
S44 What can one person do?
T444 Working alone the average person can usually do little about a problem such as this, but a number of people might collectively raise funds for research, educate the public, and secure a more vigorous program of research on Brondotitus. How would you go about initiating such efforts?
S4 Educate the public in Brondotitus.
S4 Raise money for research on Brondotitus.
S4 Seek to pressure the government to support more research on Brondotitus.
T44 How would you go about these efforts?
S44 (The answer to this question should lead to a discussion of the extensive use of communication in problem solving.)

5

T5 Compare your answers in steps 2 and 3 in the procedure. In which case did you arrive at more answers, when working alone or when working with a group?
S5 (Most students should respond, "when working with a group.")
T55 Why was this the case?
S55 Several heads are better than one.
T55 How can people take advantage of this fact?
S55 Through communication.

(This line of questioning can lead to a discussion of group brainstorming.)